

February 17, 2022

Michael Ellis
5 Dempsey Road
Broad Brook, CT 06016

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
State Department of Education Budget & HB 5037

Dear Senator Anwar and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Michael Ellis, and I am from Broad Brook. I have a daughter and a son who attend Academy of International Studies Elementary in South Windsor, which is a CREC Magnet School. I ask you to support an increase in the RESC state magnet grant.

My children benefit greatly through the extraordinary opportunities they experience every day at the Academy of International Studies Elementary. This diverse and engaging learning environment with a global significance based on six transdisciplinary themes enlightens how they see their world, their leaders, and their local community. I know that my children thrive academically and are more prepared for the real world as a result of working alongside other students from different cultural backgrounds.

Academy of International Studies enabled my daughter, Brook, to see how she could help change the world, starting with her local community. The devastations from the natural disasters of 2021 in Haiti and Louisiana captured her attention, and she decided that she wanted to help the homeless or those in need in our local communities. She volunteered her time at homeless shelters, baked cookies for its residents, and published one of her realistic fiction stories that she wrote in the 4th Grade, *The Kind Princess*, which is available on Amazon. She is donating the proceeds to local homeless shelters or other agencies that help those in need. Currently, she has donated \$500 to Hands on Hartford, with plans to donate to another agency soon. I assure you the influence and teaching she receives at the Academy of International Studies gave her the vision and confidence to write this book. Academically, her growth and a thirst for knowledge are related to her school environment and its staff. She is better attuned with her world, its cultures, and its differences. She has begun her Liberal Arts education from elementary school, and this will lead to a more focused education once she attends university.

Our magnet schools are at risk. Without sustainable funding, CREC, which operates 16 innovative schools, will be forced to either cut programming or increase the tuition costs they charge to local school districts. I ask the legislature to follow through on its promise to invest in the future of all students. Magnet schools have a successful track record of providing their students a chance to thrive. Currently, the Sheff Stipulated Agreement requires the expansion of schools and programs, before you add any more schools, adequately fund those that are established and thriving. I urge you to continue funding the schools that are already operating and demonstrating success before you consider funding new school choice options.